

NEWS

FROM YOUR MUSEUM

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

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PLANES TO AID MOOSE CENSUS

What is the moose population of Ontario? Nobody knows precisely, or even approximately, for the lordly moose, largest and most fascinating of Canada's game animals, is an elusive creature of the remoter wilderness. But steps are being taken to find out. Methods for taking the census from the air have already been worked out; aerial reconnaissance trips have been made, and by plane, paddle and just plain plodding, a scientific survey of Ontario's moose is under way. Directing this enterprise are zoologists of the Royal Ontario Museum, and the sponsorship of The Carling Conservation Club has made it possible. Reporting on progress, mammalogist Randolph L. Peterson of the Museum staff, tells of much constructive research in the haunts of the moose, and of carefully made plans for future work. Back of all this scientific investigation are intensely practical motives. There are chapters in the story of the moose still unwritten; the survival and increase of the mighty mammal must be assured. With these aims in view, scientists and conservationists are vitally concerned with the present population of the moose; its feeding and breeding ranges, and with every available fact of value in the conservation of the animals.

NATURALISTS TAKE TO THE WOODS

Birds, beasts, insects and plants studied at first hand in woodland and marsh, will be a daily routine when the Ninth Summer Nature School starts a course of two weeks on June 28th next. Sponsored by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the school will be in two groups for elementary and advanced students respectively. First group will attend the outdoor school at Camp Billie Bear near Huntsville; the second at Franklin Camp, near Parry Sound. Members of the staffs of the Royal Ontario Museum and the University of Toronto, will lead the potential nature guides on their wanderings in search of knowledge, over beckoning trails of the Lakeland.

X-RAYING INDIAN REMAINS

Inside information about the Indian bones removed from a communal burial pit at the site of Cahiague, near Orillia, last September, has been revealed by X-ray. All specimens radiographed disclosed excellent preservation and bone detail after resting in the earth more than three centuries. One of the many effigy pipes of clay—the bowl fashioned like the head of a bird—and picked from the dust near Cahiague, made an X-ray film of unusual interest. It was a graphic revelation of a method used by the Hurons in making the bore, or air passage from the pipe bowl to mouth end of the stem. In making the pipes the clay was shaped around a central cord of twisted vegetable fibres. This cord was reduced to ashes during the firing process, leaving the air passage clear, and leaving too, the pattern of the twisted cord. Displayed in the recently opened Huronia Gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum, is the effigy pipe X-rayed, together with the radiograph showing the fibre pattern clearly.

THE HISTORY OF CANADA IN PICTURES

A special exhibition of recent acquisitions to the Samuel Collection of Canadiana, given to the Royal Ontario Museum by Sigmund Samuel, LL.D., F.R.Hist.S., together with Benjamin West's great painting "The Death of Wolfe," will be on view in the Currelly and Canadiana galleries until June 15th.

Representing an effort to add a new dimension to the study of Canadian history, and to bring it into the field of visual education, the collection, now one of the largest in existence, includes some very rare prints and paintings.

FACTORIES HAVE FACES POWDERED

A dab of powder on cheeks and nose satisfies most women, but when men use talcum—some of them—they are dusted with it from top to toe. Such men are found in Madoc, Ontario, a pleasant town of Hastings County, where the use of powder seems to go to extremes. Certain buildings there are covered with it inside and out, and even the grass, shrubs and trees get a daily dusting. Men, buildings and scenery so bedizened are confined to the Madoc talc mines however, and the powdering process is quite involuntary; it just happens in the course of the daily mining and grinding. Gazing at a slab of talc from Madoc, exhibited in the mineralogy display at the Royal Ontario Museum, a girl frowned. "Surely that isn't the stuff I powder my nose with," she said, "its like marble." And talc from the mine is somewhat like marble but softer in appearance. It has a pearly lustre, is white, gray or apple-green in color, and apart altogether from its use as a cosmetic when powdered and perfumed, it is a staple mineral of commerce. It is unsurpassed as a moulding sand for the casting of metals; it prevents cracking in the processing of rubber; it is used in the preparation of fireproof materials; and has many other uses from a soap ingredient to the production of a lubricant of superb quality.

BIRD VICTIMS OF WAR

Two species of birds, the Laysan Rail and the Laysan Finch, were added to the long list of extinct animals as a result of conditions during the Second World War. Once fairly numerous on Laysan Island in the Pacific, these birds disappeared from the place which gave them their name, and when war broke out were found only on Midway Island. Transport and other vessels brought a new enemy to these birds on Midway—the Rat. Both species nested on or near the ground in vegetation. Rail and finch alike were helpless against the hungry rodents which ate them out of house and home. They died out to the last specimen and are now as extinct as the Passenger Pigeon, or the Great Auk, and like them would eventually be lost even to memory were it not for museum records. Representatives of both the Laysan Rail and the Laysan Finch are treasured specimens in the ornithological collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.

